

CITY OF SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA
COUNCIL POLICY

CURRENT

SUBJECT: COMPREHENSIVE HOMELESS POLICY
POLICY NO.: 000-51
EFFECTIVE DATE: June 12, 1995

BACKGROUND:

The City of San Diego's first official response to the growing problem of homelessness began in September 1983 with the formation of the Mayor's Task Force on the Downtown Homeless. As a result of the work of this Task Force, a county-wide, Regional Task Force was created to implement proposals from the Mayor's Task Force in March 1985 (Council R-85-1604) in cooperation with the County of San Diego, and United Way of San Diego.

The Regional Task Force is partially funded by the City of San Diego. Together with the Emergency Resources Group (ERG) and the local FEMA Board, the Task Force has been the primary tool for planning and regional coordination of homeless service delivery. In August 1987 City Council Policy No. 000-50 Emergency Response Plan for the Homeless was adopted (RR 669048, R-88-212) as the result of joint planning with representatives of City and County staff. The City has also participated in collaborative programs such as, the Interfaith Shelter Network, the Neil Good Day Center, and the Coordinated Intake Pilot Project.

Currently policy guidelines on homeless issues can be found in:

- a) Housing Element of the General Plan, draft dated January 1995,
- b) The City of San Diego, Consolidated Plan: Consolidated Submission for Federal and Community Planning and Development Programs, approved by the City Council on May 1, 1995
- c) Social Issues Policies for the Centre City Redevelopment Project, adopted by the Redevelopment Agency January 26, 1993
- d) Vision and Implementing Principles for the City of San Diego prepared by the Partnership for San Diego draft of February 8, 1993
- e) Centre City Community Plan and Planned District Ordinance adopted by the City Council and the Redevelopment Agency on April 28, 1992
- f) Additional guidelines can be found in the Legislative Policy Guidelines - 1993 - 1994 (Policy 000-19).

Over the past twelve years, there have been ongoing efforts to deal with the issue of homelessness. The Homeless Policy (The Policy) is an attempt to develop guidelines using the past decade of experience in San Diego, and other municipalities.

In May 1994, the Clinton Administration published Priority: Home! The Federal Plan to Break the Cycle of Homelessness which recommended the development of a seamless system of service delivery which would move homeless people from the street, to transitional housing, and then to permanent housing, providing services as needed through a local "Continuum of Care".

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The fundamental elements of the Continuum of Care contemplated by the federal plan are as follows:

- 1) A system of outreach and assessment
- 2) Emergency shelters
- 3) Transitional housing
- 4) Permanent housing
- 5) A system of support services appropriate to each of the stages listed above.

The elements of the Continuum of Care (Continuum) envisioned by the City of San Diego's Homeless Policy are:

- 1) Prevention
- 2) Outreach, intake and assessment
- 3) Emergency shelters and safe havens
- 4) Transitional housing
- 5) Permanent housing
- 6) A system of support services appropriate to each of the stages listed above
- 7) System wide infrastructure

PURPOSE:

It is the intent of the City Council the City of San Diego to clarify and strengthen it's role in combating homelessness. The Policy will serve as the single source document, providing guidelines for the City's response to the homeless problem. The Council recommends that the City Manager coordinate with business, social service, community groups, and other jurisdictions to continually assess needs and consistently promote programs which stabilize those at risk of becoming homeless and restore those already homeless to their optimum participation within the community. The Council further recommends that this Policy reflect the "Continuum of Care" approach in addressing homelessness in the City of San Diego.

POLICY:

The City Council recognizes that homelessness is not a crime, but responsible behavior is expected, and is the key to any recovery from homelessness. As members of the community, the homeless possess rights and responsibilities and deserve the respect and protection afforded every citizen.

The County of San Diego is primarily responsible for providing mental health, drug, alcohol, social services and health services for the homeless in the City as they receive State and Federal government funds for those purposes. The City Manager will work closely with the County, the State, and the Federal government to assure that adequate resources are made available.

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The Council further recognizes that homelessness is a regional problem, and that all other jurisdictions in the county need to develop local services and shelter options in order to reduce the burden placed on any single community.

The Council supports policies and programs which lead to the development of emergency shelter and transitional housing, together with the appropriate social, educational and employment services which help the homeless endure and overcome their temporary conditions.

Support and planning emphasis will be placed on efforts to develop communications and collaborative efforts to address the problems of the homeless population in a responsive and comprehensive manner.

To these ends, the Council supports the following policy and program recommendations.

Appropriate Support Services:

- 1) Support services include basic human services, recovery services and economic re-entry services. It is essential that these services be linked with all of the elements of the San Diego continuum.
- 2) Day Center services will be made available to the homeless population when needed, in order to offer unsheltered homeless persons a place to be during the daytime; personal hygiene services; and an entry point into shelters and other support services.
- 3) Access to all support services in the Continuum will be maintained for members of the homeless population who seek assistance.
- 4) 24 hour public restroom facilities will be made available to the homeless population.
- 5) Congregate meals should be provided indoors in a safe and sanitary setting which makes for minimum impact on the neighborhood, rather than via outdoor feeding programs.

Prevention:

- 6) A high priority will be placed on innovative programs addressing the needs of special populations and those programs focused on reducing the demand for emergency services by decreasing the potential for homelessness, combating recurring homelessness and promoting long-term self-sufficiency.
- 7) Support services will target realistic, mainstream programs leading to employment opportunities which exist or are being developed in the community.

Outreach, Intake and Assessment:

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- 8) Proactive efforts will be made to identify individuals and households that are in need of support. Once identified, assessment of needs and access to appropriate services will be provided as an entry to the Continuum.

Emergency Shelters & "Safe Havens":

- 9) A variety of emergency shelter and safe-haven options is necessary to serve the homeless who seek assistance and to stabilize individuals or families who have become chronically homeless. These forms of respite are essential to the process of exposing the many special homeless populations to the Continuum.
- 10) There is a need for temporary shelters to serve the homeless during extreme weather conditions. The City Manager will provide annual recommendations for the operation of a dispersed site, flexible homeless shelter program, which responds to weather criteria between November 1st through March 31st.

Housing:

- 11) A progression of housing options is fundamental to San Diego's efforts to reduce the demand on emergency services, to interrupt the cycle of chronic homelessness and to return as many people as possible to a level of sustainable self-sufficiency.
- 12) Preference for affordable housing opportunities will be given to those individuals and family groups that have successfully completed case managed recovery and transition programs.
- 13) Support will be given to individual and collaborative efforts to fund and develop existing and innovative solutions to the need for transitional and permanent housing for individuals and families moving through the Continuum.
- 14) Preference will be given to projects which demonstrate definitive links to appropriate and progressive support services.

Community Awareness and Involvement:

- 15) Support will be given to activities and programs that provide education and information to all segments of the community to improve the understanding of the causes and effects of homelessness.
- 16) Leadership will be provided in creating and/or supporting policies, partnerships, legislation, funding and other actions to prevent homelessness, combat recurring homelessness, and promote the return of the homeless to self-sufficiency.
- 17) The City Manager will conduct appropriate oversight and evaluation of homeless related legislation and

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initiatives.

Coordination, Planning, and Review:

- 18) The City Manager will maintain the position of Homeless Services Coordinator who will consult with the Homeless Advisory Committee which shall include members from diverse segments of the community, including the homeless.
- 19) The Homeless Services Coordinator shall ensure that the Policy is maintained, updated, and reviewed by the City Council on an annual basis.
- 20) The City Manager will cooperate with other jurisdictions and coalitions in conducting regional, goal-oriented planning and coordination that will identify gaps in service, and seek methods to improve the responsiveness of existing homeless service systems.
- 21) The City Manager will promote interagency communications, collaborations, and partnerships to achieve an efficient and cost effective delivery of services to the homeless and those at-risk of becoming homeless.
- 22) The City Council expects other government jurisdictions to meet their statutory obligations with regard to addressing human service needs of populations who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness.

Resource Development:

- 23) The City Council will promote increased utilization of volunteer and in-kind support from the private sector.
- 24) The City Council and the City Manager will use their resources to leverage support for homeless services from State and Federal government and other funding sources to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of homeless services.
- 25) Factors relating to program performance, program effectiveness and cost will be considered in making City funding and non-financial decisions.
- 26) Agencies leveraging other State, Federal, and private foundation funds be given priority for City Funding.
- 27) It is not the intent of the City Council that the City provide direct services. The City Manager shall contract with eligible non-profit or for-profit organizations to provide needed services to the homeless.

Facility Siting and Distribution:

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- 28) The City Manager will develop a method to ensure an equitable distribution of housing options and co-located support service facilities based on need, throughout the City to improve accessibility. Site selection will be focused on the needs of the neighborhood and the requirements for accessibility stated in the policy.
- 29) The City Manager will direct staff to work with neighborhoods, businesses, community organizations, private sector partnerships and service providers to facilitate the site selection and approval process.
- 30) The City Manager will develop Site Selection Guidelines and Program Design Criteria in accordance with "Fair Housing Practices" and the "American's with Disabilities Act" to mitigate potential impacts of homelessness on the community while ensuring access to, and the continuity of the City of San Diego's Continuum of Care.

HISTORY:

Adopted by Resolution R-285953 06/12/1995